

Ex-insider to head up utility agency

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A former Questar Gas Co. executive is the new director of the Utah Division of Public Utilities, the state agency that represents the public at the Utah Public Service Commission.

Jeffrey Millington has worked for Questar since 1989, most recently as natural gas production coordinator in the company's department of gas supply planning. His new job at the public utilities division was effective Wednesday.

Millington replaces Constance White, who resigned to take a job with the Western Renewable Energy Generation Information System.

Part of Millington's role at Questar was to create a long-range gas development plan and present annual updates to the Utah Public Service Commission, which sets utility rates.

"There will be those who think I'm pro-utility because I worked there" for 18 years, Millington said. "But my experience may be beneficial to consumers."

Millington said one way he can serve consumers is to raise questions during rate-making hearings that may produce information about a utility's operations that previously was unknown.

"There may be some pointed questions that others may not have thought of to ask. I have some experience in that area and I may be able to ask some of those questions," Millington said.

Consumer advocate Roger Ball said he doesn't know Millington, but his appointment continues a pattern of naming utility insiders to the division.

"The Division of Public Utilities has actively encouraged a cozy back-room relationship with these giant monopoly providers of essential services for years. Far too many of its staff are former employees of the very utilities the division is supposed to scrutinize," Ball said.

Millington holds a master's of business administration from Utah State University and an undergraduate degree in chemical engineering from the University of Utah.

Millington's knowledge of how utilities plan and operate will be vital to the division, said Francine Giani, executive director of the Utah Department of Commerce.

The division is not affiliated with the public service commission. Its job is to make sure that rates and rules set by the commission are fair to the public.

"We want strong utilities. We want safe, reliable and low-cost service for consumers, and we have to do our very best to make sure we can provide for both of those things," Millington said.

"It is a difficult balancing act. It doesn't sound easy and I don't think it is easy, but I'm looking forward to the challenge," he said.

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